

SPEECH OF HON. R. R. BUTLER,

Representative from Carter and Johnson Counties,

In the House of Representatives, upon the Resolutions introduced by Mr. Bayless, in reference to the Harper's Ferry Insurrection.

MR. SPEAKER: When I gave way for this House to adjourn on Saturday, I was attempting to answer the gentleman from Sumner, [Mr. Bennett,] and was going to say, that it was remarkably strange that he had occupied the public time nearly one and a half hours, and never mentioned the amendment offered by the gentleman from Bedford, [Mr. Wisener,] that amendment being the question under consideration, and I repeat, it is remarkable, and I am at a loss how to account for it. Does he sympathize with the fire-eaters at the South? and when we denounce them as enemies to our Union, do we tramp his toes? I hope not. I entertain a different opinion of that gentleman. I can't believe such of him. Yet I am constrained by his own course in this debate to pause, and ask myself the question, is it possible that such can be the fact? If such is not the fact, why did he not discuss the amendment, which is, that we ask our Representatives in Congress not to coalesce with the secessionist or disunionist of the South? Is there any thing wrong in that proposition? Are gentlemen upon the other side of this House afraid of making these Southern fire-eaters mad? Are they for dissolving this Union? I trust not. Then I hope gentlemen who may follow me in the discussion of the resolutions under consideration, will march up and discuss the amendment of the gentleman from Bedford.

Why shall we not ask our Representatives not to unite with the fire-eaters and disunionists? Is there no danger apprehended by the Union-loving and conservative people of this grand confede-

racy from and by the reckless and imprudent course of these fanatics South? I believe, sir, there is great danger. I believe we have much to fear from them. I believe we have men South who would to-morrow sink the Union into oblivion, if they could advance their own interests. I believe we have men South who, for the Presidency of a Southern Confederacy, would deluge the South in blood in the twinkling of an eye. Have we nothing to base these opinions upon? We unmistakably have. During the last contest for the Presidency, we heard Gov. Wise, of Virginia, publicly developing the scheme and the means of carrying out a dissolution of the Union. He spoke of a national civil war as what they would inevitably have to encounter, but that, he said, was not what he most deprecated. It was the neighborhood civil war, as he termed it, which they would have to carry on with the fifty thousand Unionists of Virginia that he deplored. What! He deplored that there were fifty thousand citizens of the good Old Dominion who loved the union of these States—who were not willing to follow any distracted brain to overthrow this Union! And to keep down and overcome these Union loving citizens, he would arm the negroes of Virginia! Can I find language to express my condemnation of such sentiments? Arm the negroes to murder the friends of the Union!

And further, Mr. Speaker, we find a Southern Senator, the Hon. T. L. Clingman, of North Carolina, saying that they intended to put down the Union men of North Carolina by the swift attention of vigilance committees, that is, by organized assassination. And still further, the Democratic Administration organ, published at Washington under the control and nose of the President, admitted as an undisputed fact that there is a wide-spread and desperate conspiracy at the South for dissolving the Union. None of these met with contradiction or rebuke from any Democratic journal. Such acquiescence under the charges and avowals is equal to full proof; and in the face of all these, and many others of which I could mention, we are not to instruct our members of Congress not to coalesce with the disunionist at the South? If we are to vote on the Bayless resolutions, and we are to ask our Representative not to coalesce with the Black Republicans in the organization of the House, why not say also to them, touch not the hand of a Southern disunionist. I can see no good reason. None has been offered by gentlemen upon the other side of this House. None I presume can or will be offered. Yet I find, Mr. Speaker, a disposition among gentlemen upon the other side of this House to oppose this amendment, and they are seemingly astonished at the gentleman from Bedford [Mr. Wisener] for saying that he had as much respect for an abolitionist as he had for a disunionist. Such are, I have no doubt, his honest sentiments, and they are the sentiments of thousands South.

I come not, as the advocate of any Republican, or Black Repub-

lican, as they are called. No. I have no sympathy for them ; and as for Wm. H. Seward, I utterly detest him, and language fails me to express my abhorrence of him since he made his Rochester speech, and his connection with the Harper's Ferry riot. I endorse every word uttered in reference to him by the gentleman from Haywood, [Mr. Lea.] He says he is an arch traitor, and should be hung as high as Haman. Such I endorse. Yet what do we find now in Tennessee ? We find a Democratic journal, the *UNION AND AMERICAN*, a paper that has the largest circulation in Tennessee, the leading journal of the Democratic party, saying that Seward is as good or better than Douglas ; and we find the name of S. A. Douglas floating at the masthead of the *West Tennessee Democrat* for the Presidency. A man who, says the gentleman from Haywood, is an arch traitor, &c., the leading organ of his party says he is as good a man for the South as Douglas, and that man's claims are urged by a leading Democratic journal for the Presidency.

In the face of all these facts, gentlemen upon this floor say the Democratic party is the only party that can save the South. Is the election of Douglas to save the South ? Does any gentleman who holds a place upon this floor say that his election will save the South ? Does the South believe with him upon the vital question that is paramount to all questions in the country ? No man South utters such miserable humbuggery, and yet, sir, we find many Democrats, and some who have places upon this floor, declaring if Douglas is the nominee of the Charleston convention they will support him. What confidence can the Southern people have in such a party—a party that would forsake and desert every principle that is in the heart of every true Southern man, and vote for a man merely for success ? That is the party we are told is to save the Union and vindicate the rights of the South. If the South depends upon and is looking for protection from that quarter, she is relying upon a weak, sickly and distracted party.

Have we any Democratic testimony to corroborate the foregoing remarks ? What did the *Washington Union* of last March say on that subject ? It said : " If Democracy cannot prevail against the Republican party it is because its organization is demoralized, its integrity questionable, its honor doubtful, its character bad. We have had enough of great men ; we want good men. Ambitious combinations are a curse to the Democratic party. They have tainted its integrity, demoralized it, weakened it, and rendered it a doubtful antagonist, even against the open enemies of the Union. They have stricken down and degraded all broad, liberal, comprehensive statesmanship ; they have substituted the miserable device of demagogues for those great principles of government, under which alone the industry of the country can be developed. These are the men who would control the Democratic

party. They have controlled it until, its forces are scattered, its laws disregarded, its councils unheeded and its power contemptible."

Such, sir, is the condition of the Democratic party to-day, and the writer of the above article in the *Union* at Washington, the great capitol of this grand confederacy, spoke doubtless the sentiments of an honest heart. Yet, after all that has been said by gentlemen of large experience, and who occupy a position to understand, and fully understand, all about the Democratic party and its powers and destiny, we are told that it is the only party that can save the country and the South.

Hear what a Democratic United States Senator, the Hon. A. G. Brown, of Mississippi, said on the 8th of this month—and I presume none will say he is not acquainted with the condition of the Democratic party. He has given his whole life to the party—he has grown gray in the service of the party. Among other things, he said: "We are told that this course on the part of the South (speaking of our rights in the Territories) will break up the National Democratic party. Well, suppose it does; for what end was that party organized? In the language of the constitution, it was organized to establish and insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, and promote the general welfare. If, instead of meeting these just ends, it defeats justice, promotes discord, provides for the defence of the North, and promotes only that interest which is hostile to the South, then I have no hesitation in saying it ought to be broken up."

Such, Mr. Speaker, are the sentiments of the distinguished Democratic Senator. Does he look to the Democratic party to protect the rights of the South? Has he any confidence in the party? None, whatever. That is not all. We have further testimony—Democratic evidence—and I presume that will be good authority with my Democratic brethren on the other side of this house. I will not offer them Whig or Opposition testimony, for we have enough and to spare of Democratic testimony. The *Charleston Mercury*, a leading Democratic journal, said: "We have seen nothing in National Democracy of late years which challenges our admiration. It has trifled with constitutional injunctions; it has aided in the passage of unjust and unequal laws; it has squandered the public money; robbed the common treasury, and to foreign paupers it has given the public lands. Its promises have been broken, its pledges disregarded, and its professions falsified." And, further, the same journal said: "And to conclude the whole matter, National Democracy is corrupt, vascillating and false; it wears the garb of sanctity, that its hideous deformities may be concealed; it woos but to ruin, and wins but to destroy." And is that the party to save this country and protect the rights of the South? Who can look to that party

for succor and support in maintaining the perpetuity of the Union and to sustain and defend the rights of the South?

Then, sir, where are we to look, whither can we go? These are questions that should excite every patriot and lover of his common country throughout the length and breadth of the land. What is to save this once happy and prosperous country from the ambition of time-serving demagogues, who have almost destroyed the peace, happiness, and prosperity of the best and freest people on God's green earth? We look for the conservative and union-loving men of all parties to rise up as one great and strong man, and smite and put down all factions who are uniting for the sake of success to ruin and forever destroy our happy country. Let party and party names give way, let platforms stand aside, let demagogues be hurled from place and power, and good and true men succeed them, and peace, tranquility, and prosperity will again resume their places.

Mr. Speaker, the South has done much, sir, to encourage the Republicans at the North. I am sorry so to say, but frankness should characterize every gentleman upon this floor who may discuss this important subject. Sir, we find men in the South who had published to the world that slavery was a moral and political evil, and desired to live to see the day when the State of Virginia would be divided, and one portion become free territory; and after all that—after these sentiments were declared upon the floor of the Virginia Legislature—we find the Democratic party nominating and elevating the author of those sentiments and declarations to the highest office within their gift. Did not that encourage the Republicans North? Was that not regarded as an expression of friendship towards them? Did they not in their leading journals hail it as a bright day for Abolitionism in Virginia? Did they not say that Virginia, the Old Dominion, the mother of Presidents, the home of Washington and Jefferson, had well nigh thrown off the yoke of slavery? Hear what one of their leading organs said after the election of John Letcher.

The Boston *Liberator* said:

“ABOLITION VICTORY IN VIRGINIA.—The Telegraph informs us of the election of a Virginia Abolitionist to the office of Chief Magistrate of the Old Dominion. We were not prepared for such cheering news. His majority may be small, but we have abundant cause to rejoice that slavery in Virginia is on the wane. The Governor elect lives among the Scotch Irish in the heart of the State, and was the ardent advocate a few years ago of the abolition of slavery in Western Virginia.”

And still further, what do we hear. The New York Evening *Post*, a Democratic free soil paper, said:

“It fills us with joy to report the election of a conservative free-soiler to the important office of Governor of Virginia. Mr. Letcher was an advocate of emancipation in Western Virginia

some ten or twelve years ago, though driven by apparent policy to palter to Eastern Virginia, it is well known that he cheerishes his earlier opinions, and will be encouraged by his election to resume them at an appropriate season, and his conservative free-soil brethren at the North hail this victory with unalloyed pleasure."

Can any one say that the Abolition party have not been encouraged by the South. Did not Democracy know, and well know, that John Letcher had proclaimed this doctrine? And were not his sentiments published to the world? Yet they would, in the name of Democracy, elevate him to the highest office within their gift, over a man who loved the South and her institutions, who had always battled for her and her rights under the Constitution. Yet party was to triumph if the victory was to fill the hearts of the vilest freedom-shriekers North with joy. Well may Southern men say that Democracy cannot save the country and protect the rights of the South.

It has been said, Mr. Speaker, that this discussion was brought about for the purpose of making a certain man (John Bell) President. Who brought it about? Not this side of the House. The other side introduced the resolutions; we offered an amendment, and if the amendment brought about the protracted debate, we are responsible for it. We apprehend as much danger from the fire-eater as we do from the Black Republicans, and I am willing and ready to vote for the resolutions with the amendment, notwithstanding I believe our Representatives will and are able to take care of themselves. They were elected by the same people that we were; our constituents are theirs; they are fresh from the people—more so than we are. We left home in September, they are still at home among the people, and they know better the sentiments of the people upon the Harper's Ferry difficulty than we do. It has occurred since we left our homes, and why consume the public time and waste the public money over this matter?

Do gentlemen suppose that our members elect to Congress will do anything detrimental to the interest of Tennessee and the South? I hope they have a better opinion of the representatives elected to Congress from the Volunteer State. I believe, sir, I am acquainted with all of them. I have every confidence in their fidelity to the South. And permit me to say a word in reference to the distinguished gentleman who represents the first District in this State. I believe the South never had, never will have a truer, more unflinching, unwavering friend and advocate upon the floor of the House of Representatives. No man who knows him has any doubt upon that subject, and his colleagues I believe have the same character, and I feel that Tennessee will present an unbroken front in defense of the rights of the South.

As to President making, which was mentioned by the gentleman from Sumner, (Mr. Bennett,) I have my preference. I prefer

John Bell to any living man; and, Mr. Speaker, it is not necessary for my purpose to enter into a discussion of the political history of that man. The history of the country is his history. He has been too long and favorably known for me or any other gentleman upon this floor to add an inch to his political stature. He soars above the reach of the futile attempts to take one page from the history of his greatness. Many malignant darts have been, and are still being hurled at him, but they have and will fall harmless at his feet. A country may run mad, demagogues may succeed and hurl great men from power, but when the fury shall have passed away, and judgment occupies the throne, justice will be restored, and with it good and true men be reinstated and elevated. But, sir, if John Bell is not the choice of the Union party of the country, I am for any good, true conservative man, one that can calm the turbid waters and restore our government to its former purity. I care not for names, all I desire is to assist in elevating a good and reliable man to the Presidency,

Gentlemen may make light of this Union; those who are raised in times of peace, who know but little of the hardships and sufferings of the old patriots of the Revolution, half clad, half fed, and who slept upon the ground covered by the heavens alone, whose march was indicated by the blood "which oozed from their feet as they traveled over the frozen ground;" to them the Union was worth much. I need not talk of the value of this Union; figures would fail to enumerate, the mind cannot comprehend it. All lovers of their ancestry, lovers of their country, lovers of their Washington, and those who assisted him in establishing this Union, and all of any party who love their country, will join in saying, let parties, let platforms, let factions and would-be-rulers and dictators go; let us preserve this Union, and let us hand it down to our children, as our fathers handed it down to us.

